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soon became skilled riders, but among the other Pilcomayo tribes they are rare. Before the Chaco Indian became acquainted with the white man, the dog was the only domestic animal known to him. These half-starved, fierce, and treacherous dogs are a real nuisance in the Mataco and the Choroti villages to the white traveller who has to stay among the Indians, because in their hunger they are always on the alert to rob him of edible things, among which they include not only his provisions, but also his saddlegear, boots, and other leather goods. Although the Mataco and the Choroti treat their numerous dogs badly and evidently have little use for them even as watches, yet in a way they regard them as members of the tribe. They never kill a dog, however old and wretched it may be, and when it dies they lament over it just as they lament over a fellow-tribesman. This curious practice is due to superstitious reasons, fear of the spirit of the dog. Like many other South American Indians, the natives of the Chaco believe that the souls of their dead tribesmen may reincarnate themselves in the dogs.

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Only the Tobas, who are culturally superior to the rest of the Pilcomayo tribes, feed their dogs properly and have real use for them both in hunting and as watchdogs. But even these dogs are of uncertain breed and by nature so savage that for my own part I failed in my attempts to train them according to European methods.

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These general remarks on the material culture of the Pilcomayo tribes may suffice as a basis for the following description of their social customs and their intellectual culture. I shall repeatedly have occasion to touch upon the ergology of the Indians in describing their magical ornaments and amulets, as well as various objects used at religious ceremonies.

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old men to die a natural death, but when they grow very weakly and sickly they kill them with an arrow-shot in the heart, whereupon they burn them with all their property instead of burying them, which among the Choroti is the general mode of disposing of the remains of the dead. The reason which they gave me for this custom was that if an old man is allowed to die a natural death he will be changed into an evil demon (*mōhsek*), who will rage in the village and kill all the people. This, according to their idea, can be prevented by giving the old men a premature, violent death.[1]) In order to understand this custom we must, moreover, take into consideration that to the mind of these Indians *all* aged men are more or less versed in the magic art, *i. e.* are sorcerers, and the spirits of sorcerers are specially feared.

The fact that old men and sorcerers are believed to be transformed after death into evil *mōhsek* seems to suggest that these spirits or demons are nothing but disembodied human souls, who have in the after-life been changed into supernatural and mostly evilly disposed beings. As a matter of fact, the death-spirit residing in the grave where a dead body has been buried is called *mōhsek* by the Choroti. Like most other primitive peoples the Choroti fear the burial-places because they fear coming in contact with the spirits haunting these places. It seems therefore evident that at any rate the souls of certain persons are changed into *mōhsek* after death. The word *mōhsek* may therefore be best translated into 'ghost'. The Indians only use it of the disembodied souls or spirits of dead men, but not of the shadow-like »double» of a living person, for which they have no particular word. Even when speaking of a recently departed person they generally simply use the expression *yāl*, *i.e.* »the dead one». *Mōhsek* particularly seems to have reference to the spirits of men who died long ago, and these spirits as a rule are more evilly disposed and more feared than the spirits of Indians recently departed.

The Choroti, like other Chaco Indians, do not deify inanimate objects of nature to the same extent as many other South American tribes. Yet

[1]) Nordenskiöld's categoric statement as to the practice of infanticide and parricide among the Choroti therefore is not correct. (»Der Mord beschränkt sich auf den Kinder- und Elternmord»; and: »Wenn ein Indianer seine alte blinde Mutter oder seinen verkrüppelten Vater tötet, so befreit er sie selbst von einem Leben das ihnen eine Last ist und sich selbst von einer Extramühe im Kampfe ums Dasein.» (*Indianerleben*, p. 38). As I have stated above, the killing of parents is limited to old men, and this custom must wholly be explained from the superstition of the Indians. Infanticide again is limited to the cases mentioned by me in a previous chapter.

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the death-spirit from rising from the grave. The Tobas believe that if shortly after the burial the body is exhumed, the spirit will come out and may transform himself into a tiger which will kill the people. But the latter may sometimes happen even without any particular profanation of the burial-place.

The customs here described with particular reference to the Tobas are typical of the burial customs of the Pilcomayo tribes in general. Thus the Choroti and the Mataco as a rule bury the corpse in a seated or reclining posture as do the Tobas. There are however exceptions to this rule, and at least in one case which came under my notice the dead Choroti man had been buried in a lying posture. At each end of the grave had been placed a clay pot, partly filled with water. The idea underlying this arrangement was not quite clear. Since among the Indians supernatural power is frequently ascribed to clay pots, it is probable that they had been placed on the tomb for some superstitious reasons, perhaps with a view to keeping off the death-demon. I may add that among the Chaco Indians offerings of food and drink, or other kinds of offering, are not generally made to the spirits of the departed. Certain traces of food and drink offerings have been found among the Mataco, but on the whole we may say that the cult of the dead, which plays such an important part in the religion of most South American Indians, is unknown to the natives of the Gran Chaco. When I asked the Choroti whether they would not offer food and drink to the spirit of an Indian who had recently been buried, they laughed and answered: »He is dead, he wants no food». Still of course neither the Choroti nor other Chaco Indians have wholly divested their minds of the primitive idea that in the after-life the soul has to a certain extent the same wants and appetites as in this earthly life.

As a rule the place where a person has been buried is not, among the Choroti and the Mataco, marked by any tomb or heap of earth thrown up over the grave. Some tribes, however, at any rate the Choroti, are in the habit of constructing, over the place, a primitive kind of hut, consisting of a roof of twigs and grass resting upon four poles. The hut is said to be »the habitation of the *móhsek*». Chiefs and old family fathers are particularly honoured in this way after death.

The customs practised immediately after a death are in their main features the same in all Chaco tribes. The Choroti, as soon as the sick Indian has drawn his last breath, start to make a tremendous noise with all sorts of rattles and by shouting and wailing. The medicine-men